

IV. CORRIDOR STRATEGIES

Overview

Market Economics

Land Use and Zoning

Housing

Transportation

Urban Design and Public Realm

IV. Corridor Strategies

OVERVIEW

The following section presents the corridor strategies. These strategies are based on the corridor assessment for:

- Market Economics
- Land Use and Zoning
- Housing
- Transportation
- Urban Design/Public Realm

Many issues resulted from the corridor assessment that not only applied to one particular neighborhood area but rather applied throughout the study area. As a result, this section proposes strategies to address the issues identified in the corridor assessment sections. To learn more about these strategies with respect to each neighborhood area, refer to section V: Neighborhood Areas – Issues & Recommendations.

IV. Corridor Strategies

MARKET ECONOMICS



FIG. 26.1 - Georgia Avenue Retail

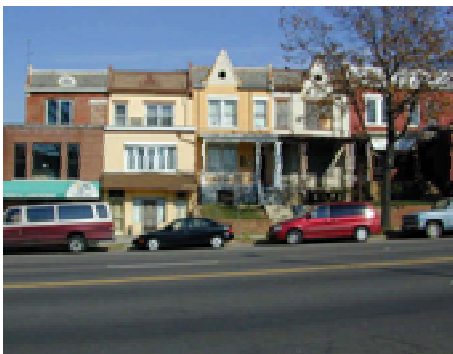


FIG. 26.2 - Georgia Avenue Rowhouses

To respond to the unique market opportunities and constraints of the Georgia Avenue corridor, the following strategies are recommended:

- Encourage and assist development entities to target blocks with high vacancies and underutilized land, to foster property assemblage and acquisition for redevelopment
- Encourage retail development that brings the desired mix of quality neighborhood-serving businesses and services
- Encourage office development in first and/or second floors of mixed-use buildings
- Encourage a mix of residential development along the corridor to absorb the five-year demand for 1,605 new housing units. This residential development should be targeted in blocks that have high vacancies and/or underutilized properties and can be assembled for acquisition and redevelopment
- Investigate a new Zone District and/or an Overlay Zone to stabilize and encourage redevelopment and to match current demand by type, location, and building configuration
- Explore Main Street designation for the existing neighborhood business district along Ninth Street and Upshur Street (east of Georgia Avenue)
- Explore and implement shared parking and provide new small parking lots to serve strategic areas of the corridor
- Investigate and market incentives to assist existing businesses and new investors:
 - Create a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district on Georgia Avenue, from Shepherd Street to Park Road
 - Develop a retail leasing and management strategy to recruit tenants and direct them to landlords/property owners, and to provide technical assistance to existing and prospective retailers
 - Link and build capacity of existing business development programs to cater to specific needs of businesses
 - Restructure the Georgia Avenue Façade Improvement Program to include technical assistance to businesses
- Target public capital improvements towards projects and locations that can encourage and leverage other new private development. These public capital improvements include intersection improvements, streetscape, pedestrian safety measures, and public art.

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LAND USE AND ZONING

Residential Uses

The most northern portion of the study area, the 4500 block of Georgia Avenue—from Allison Street to Buchanan Street—is located in the R-4 Zone District. This is a row house district that does not permit apartment buildings. However, four apartment buildings already exist in the block. In the summer 2002, a property owner proposed to build a five-unit apartment building on a vacant lot in the 4500 block. However, the Board of Zoning Adjustments denied this application based on the existing R-4 Zone District. Currently, there is another development proposal to build a small apartment building. The R-5-B Zone District, a moderate density apartment zone, is recommended for the 4500 block, west and east sides. The R-5-B Zone District would bring the existing four apartment buildings into conformance, as well as allow the development of new moderate density apartment buildings.

The other existing uses in the block include row houses, semi-detached and detached dwellings, which would continue as permitted uses within the R-5-B zone. Four one-story retail storefronts currently exist in the northwest corner of the block. These uses are nonconforming under the existing R-4 Zone District and would continue to be nonconforming uses in the new R-5-B Zone District.

Mixed Uses

NOTE: The following two Land Use and Zoning Strategies are presented as options for further discussion/analysis. During the review and comment period for the draft Plan, a preferred option will be determined and included in the final Plan document.

Throughout the planning process, one proposal that emerged was to create a New Zone District to address the land use pattern and strengthen the economic vitality of the Georgia Avenue corridor. The idea was to permit and strengthen retail where it is supportable—around the Metro Station, along

Ninth Street and Upshur Street (east of Georgia Avenue), and near Howard University. These retail concentrations would be interspersed with the new Zone District containing residential, office and institutional uses. New retail would not be permitted in the residential/office/institutional areas, but existing retailers would be permitted to remain in their current space. The residential/office/institutional areas are located where there is a high degree of retail vacancy, evidence that the existing zoning and the market are not in sync. The blocks where a new Zone District could apply would include five blocks (out of the forty blocks) within the study area:

- Half of 2900 block, west & east sides, from Harvard Street to Hobart Place, and 3000 block, east side only, from Hobart Place to Irving Street
- 3200 block, west & east sides, from Kenyon Street to Lamont Street
- 4000 block, west & east sides, from Shepherd Street to Taylor Street, and half of 4100 block, west & east sides, from Taylor Street to south of Upshur Street
- 4300 block, west side only, from Varnum Street to Webster Street
- 4400 block, west side only, from Webster Street to Allison Street

Buildings and lots, which are vacant at the time of the rezoning, would be required to conform to the new zone. Together this will have the effect of bringing the supply of retail space in line with the market for that retail.

These ideas were presented to community groups, business owners and the affected property owners. While some welcomed the idea of the new Zone District as a strategy to attract better quality retail to the corridor, some concerns were raised as to the restrictions on existing businesses and property owners. These concerns included:

- Non-conforming use status
- Inability of businesses in proposed rezoning area to expand in existing space
- Inability of businesses to relocate to a larger, more desirable retail space along the corridor where the new Zone District would not be applied

From these discussions, two key issues emerged which are the basis of the alternative land use and zoning strategy outlined below:

1. How to restrict undesirable uses and encourage a better mix of uses within the current Zone Districts
2. How to strengthen existing businesses and property owners by allowing for business expansion and increased Floor Area Ratios (FAR) within the current Zone District

An alternative to the creation of a new Zone District is the adoption of an overlay zone that would encompass all properties located within the existing C-2-A Zone District. This area covers properties fronting Georgia Avenue from Allison Street south to Shepherd Street and from Park Road south to Euclid Street. The overlay zone would be written to address the two key issues stated above. For example, the overlay zone could restrict new undesirable uses—such as used automobile lots and liquor stores—from being located within the Zone District. Also, the overlay zone could permit increased FAR for office, institutional, and residential uses. The overlay zone would avoid creating any nonconforming uses, and eliminate concerns of property owners. The overlay zone, however, would be less effective in concentrating new retail development in precise locations and configurations along the corridor.

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HOUSING



FIG. 28.1 - Typical Washington, DC, streetscape with a variety of housing types

The housing strategy addresses the two key issues identified in Ward 1 neighborhoods along Georgia Avenue: 1) housing rehabilitation and vacant & abandoned residential properties, and 2) the Park Morton Apartment Complex. The following strategies are recommended:

Housing Rehabilitation and Vacant & Abandoned Properties

- As a pilot project, establish a **Targeted Block Initiative (TBI)** to focus financial and technical resources in a neighborhood that contains a significant level of both deteriorated residential properties and owner-occupied units. Homeowners would receive assistance to make interior and exterior improvements to their homes, which would make a visible impact in the neighborhood block. The concept is that small-scale, but carefully chosen home improvements help prevent larger scale deterioration and signal that positive neighborhood change is taking place. This, in turn, would serve as a catalyst for residential improvements in other neighborhood blocks.
- Encourage the **Home Again Initiative**, administered by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, to inventory and focus on vacant and abandoned properties located in and near the Georgia Avenue study area. This initiative works to improve the city's housing condition and increase supply by converting abandoned properties into quality, affordable housing.

Park Morton Apartment Complex

- Establish a **Park Morton Task Force** to address the issues surrounding the housing complex. The Task Force should be led by the D.C. Housing Authority and involve other District agencies and neighborhood stakehold-

ers. The Task Force should examine and implement short- and long-term sustainable changes to address the social and physical challenges of the apartment complex.

- Apply **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)** strategies to improve safety in the apartment complex. CPTED is based on the premise that "proper design and effective use of the physical environment can produce behavioral effects that will reduce the incidence and fear of crime, thereby improving the quality of life." CPTED strategies include:
 - Using landscaping and materials to deter crime (for example, thorny shrubs and fencing)
 - Using landscaping materials that provide unobstructed views
 - Using lighting along walkways and entryways
 - Creating a sense of ownership and private space by designing symbolic barriers through landscaping (for example, changes in paving stone patterns, changes in types of plantings, and use of hedges and fences)

IV. Corridor Strategies

TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation Strategies present improvement recommendations for key transportation elements, including:

- Traffic
- Parking
- Transit
- Pedestrian
- Bicycle

In addition, recommendations are proposed for the following two locations:

- Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue Intersection Vicinity
- Georgia Avenue/Kansas Avenue Intersection Vicinity

(Note: Additional planning and engineering studies would need to be conducted before implementing some of the recommendations presented in this report.)

Traffic

- Examine opportunities to reduce speeds on Georgia Avenue through traffic signalization, street-scaping, and roadway design modifications.
- Examine opportunities to reduce travel speeds on residential streets through neighborhood traffic calming measures.

Parking

- Explore development of small public parking lots and/or shared parking to serve community uses and provide short to midterm parking throughout the corridor. Potential locations include:
 - 3600 East
 - 3400 East
 - 2900 West
 - 2700 West

- Examine the use of on-street parking restrictions to confirm that parking restrictions are compatible with adjacent land uses.
- Conduct a parking occupancy study to determine potential problems and possible solutions for legal Ward 4 parking near the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metrorail Station.

Transit

- Look for opportunities to extend Yellow Line service north of the Mt. Vernon Square 7th Street-Convention Center Metrorail Station as a way to increase the frequency of trains to the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metrorail Station.
- Promote increased use of Metrorail through transit-oriented development.
- Maximize use of Metrobuses by relocating bus stops where appropriate, constructing new bus shelters, and increasing bus capacity, where necessary.
- Study implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail Transit (LRT) service along the Georgia Avenue Corridor, as called for in a recent WMATA/DDOT (District Department of Transportation) transportation study.

Pedestrian

- Implement improvements to the Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue intersection, including “bulb-outs” and median installations along New Hampshire Avenue.
- Widen sidewalks along Georgia Avenue to allow outdoor seating areas and functional walking space in front of future restaurants, shops, and cafe locations.

Bicycle

- Study potential measures to improve the safety of bicycle crossings across Georgia Avenue, which could include the installation

of additional traffic signals, where warranted.

- Encourage local bicycle use through the addition of more bicycle racks in the commercial area.

Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue Intersection Vicinity

The following enhancements could potentially create a more pedestrian-friendly environment at the intersection. The below measures should be implemented using Federal and DDOT guidelines, where applicable.

- Install more visible crosswalks.
- Construct medians where appropriate.
- Possibly eliminate the southern-most bus bay along the west side of Georgia Avenue in order to narrow the pedestrian crossing.
- Study existing traffic signal timings to ensure adequate timing for pedestrian crossings.
- Install “count-down” pedestrian signals.
- Ensure existing street lighting provides for adequate pedestrian visibility.

Georgia Avenue/Kansas Avenue Intersection Vicinity

- Conduct a traffic and pedestrian improvement study to address safety and circulation issues at Georgia Avenue/Kansas Avenue, including irregularly shaped blocks created by Taylor Street, Upshur Street, Varnum Street, and Webster Street, 9th Street and Iowa Avenue.
- Install new traffic and pedestrian safety control devices where warranted.

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URBAN DESIGN AND PUBLIC REALM

The Georgia Avenue study area is the primary retail corridor for several diverse neighborhoods. The overall urban design strategy focuses on development opportunities and public realm (i.e., the space between buildings, such as streets and sidewalks) improvements that seek to enhance these neighborhood areas and their unique character.

Urban Design

- Identify/characterize the study area by four neighborhood areas along the corridor
 1. "Upshur" - Decatur Street to Shepherd Street
 2. "Petworth-Metro" - Shepherd Street to Otis Place
 3. "Park View/Park Morton" - Otis Place to Irving Street
 4. "Pleasant Plains" - Irving Street to Euclid Street
- Maximize development around the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station
- Promote a mix of development projects ranging in size from large-scale mixed-use block redevelopments to small-scale infill developments and adaptive reuse projects
- For key Redevelopment Opportunity Sites (see Section VI), enhance the overall streetscape and public realm by encouraging moderate density development (3 to 6 stories)
- Diversify the housing stock by encouraging redevelopment opportunities with multifamily buildings for families, senior citizens, and first-time home buyers
- Increase the affordability of the housing stock by encouraging development opportunities with a variety of housing types

- Strategically locate parking so that it is visually unobtrusive

Public Realm

- Create a more walkable, pedestrian friendly environment through public realm improvements to sidewalks, cross walks, and intersections, and by discouraging automobile-oriented, drive through businesses
- Enhance the public realm through the creation of public monuments and art celebrating African American history and culture
- Encourage some form of public green space or civic space as new redevelopment projects are constructed